

SETI@home completes a decade of ET search

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The SETI@home project, which has involved the worldwide public in a search for radio-wave evidence of life outside Earth, marks its 10th anniversary on May 17, 2009.

The project, based at the Space Sciences Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, records and analyzes data from the world's largest radio telescope, the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico. The collected computing power of hundreds of thousands of volunteer PCs is used to search this data for narrow-band signals (similar to TV or cell-phone transmissions) and other types of signals of possible extraterrestrial origin.

SETI@home was conceived in 1995. Development began in 1998, with initial funding from The Planetary Society and Paramount Pictures. It was publicly launched on May 17, 1999, and the number of volunteers quickly grew to about one million.

Because of the presence of noise and man-made radio interference, SETI@home doesn't get excited by individual signals. Instead, it waits until it hears a signal several times from the same spot on the sky. It takes years of observing to cover the sky the required number of times. In 2004 SETI@home collected their results to date, identified the best signal 'candidates', and used the Arecibo telescope to re-observe each of the corresponding sky locations. No extra-terrestrial signals were found, but the search was the most sensitive radio SETI sky survey that had been done.

Over the years, improvements to the Arecibo telescope have significantly improved the quality of data available to SETI@home, and the continuous increase in the speed of the average PC has made it possible to use more sensitive and sophisticated analysis techniques. Today, SETI@home continues its search for evidence of [extraterrestrial life](#), with greater sensitivity than ever, and its hundreds of thousands of volunteers continue to engage in lively on-line forums and in a spirited competition for most data processed.

More information: setiathome.berkeley.edu/index.php

Provided by SETI@home

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